

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Petition by Christian Leader to save FFWPU from Japanese Government

Knut Holdhus
January 25, 2025



Facsimiles of the front page of [Sekai Nippo](#) January 25, 2025. The person portrayed is evangelist Satoshi Mizota

Christian evangelist starts petition against dissolution order requested by authorities and describes it as extreme and cruel, making members of large religious minority social outcasts



Tokyo, 25th January 2025 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper [Sekai Nippo](#). Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#).

Teachings to Eliminate Heterodoxy - Opinions or Doctrines at Variance with Official Position - Not Found in the Bible

Concerned about dissolution order, Christian evangelist Satoshi Mizota starts petition

by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of [Sekai Nippo](#)



A Christian has stepped up to express regret over the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's (MEXT) petition to the Tokyo District Court for a dissolution order against the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)). This individual is Satoshi Mizota (溝田悟士), an evangelist at Matsudo Rokukodai St. Stephen Chapel (松戸六高台聖ステファン礼拝堂) in Matsudo City, Chiba Prefecture. In December of last year, Mizota launched an online petition opposing the dissolution order. As of 23rd January, the petition had gathered 1,636 signatures and over 560 messages of support.

"We should pause and reflect using our own reason."
Mizota explains in the petition's statement that the growing

criticism of the former [Unification Church](#), particularly following the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (安倍晋三), has led to excessive media coverage that sometimes crosses the line. He declares his concern over the movement toward a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#) and calls for the dissolution order not to be approved.

Historically, Mizota viewed the [Family Federation](#) as heretical, given its doctrinal framework differing from Christianity. However, during his university years, he had the opportunity to interact with former [Family Federation](#) members after discovering that a pastor at his church was involved in activities to help people leave the [group](#). Through these interactions, Mizota came to realize that [Family Federation](#) members, like mainstream Christians, practiced love in their own way, leaving him with complex feelings.



The Bible contains accounts of Jesus Christ engaging without discrimination with individuals who were labeled as "heretics" by Jewish society. Mizota asserts,

"It goes against the teachings of the Bible to ostracize [Family Federation](#) members simply because they are considered heretics or to deny them the status of neighbours."

For him, efforts to exclude the [Family Federation](#) conflict with the spirit of Christianity, compelling him to take a stand. He emphasizes that the religious community has an obligation to trust individual members of the [Family Federation](#) who are attempting to address their issues and to "guide them in a positive direction".

If the dissolution order is finalized, the assets of the [religious organization](#), including its

buildings, would inevitably be confiscated. Mizota fears that this scenario could lead to unintended and undesirable consequences.

"If told not to gather, believers will be forced underground": Mizota warns against marginalization and calls for the [Family Federation](#)'s continued existence

"If told not to gather, believers will have no choice but to go underground. Being excluded from society and losing their place could lead to radicalization and extremism."

With this concern, Satoshi Mizota argues that the [Family Federation](#)'s organization must be allowed to continue.



In reality, some believers have already faced human rights violations, such as being denied apartment [rental agreements](#) or having job offers rescinded, due to the declaration [by then Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (岸田 文雄)] of severing ties with the [religious organization](#). Mizota, preempting criticism of his comparison, said,

"I'm not sure if I should use this example, but imagine a scenario where yakuza [Japanese mafia] are banned from owning homes. Would society become safer with homeless yakuza roaming the streets?"

Mizota strongly criticizes the sudden push to dissolve the [organization](#), stating:

"Since the [Family Federation](#) was officially recognized as a religious corporation in 1964, there had been no significant issues raised. Now, just two years after the death of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, demands for dissolution have surfaced out of nowhere - this is an extreme and cruel measure."

He argues that if there were genuine issues, they should have been addressed when they became apparent, through guidance or other measures. The government's abrupt attempt to dismantle the [organization](#) without even issuing a warning is, in Mizota's words, "baffling", akin to "a death sentence without probation". He strongly asserts that it is the government's failure to exercise its supervisory responsibility.

Mizota points out that since the [Family Federation's](#) 2009 Declaration of Compliance, the [organization](#) has been reflecting on its past actions and adjusting its activities. He notes,

"Just as we reflect on and atone for the atrocities of the past, the members of the former [Unification Church](#) have been confronting their own 'evils' and striving to improve their conduct."



A 19th century witch hunt: Arresting a "witch" in New England, USA. Photo: From the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1886

In the petition's statement, Mizota likens the government and media's treatment of the [Family Federation](#) to "a modern [witch hunt](#)". At the same time, he does not shy away from criticizing the [organization](#) itself, especially regarding its controversial "spiritual sales" practices involving exorbitantly priced religious goods. Mizota insists that the [Family Federation](#) must publicly apologize for these actions, which he criticizes as being "far from reasonable", even compared to the goods sold at Shinto shrines. He asserts that unless the [Family Federation](#) reflects on and addresses these past misdeeds, it cannot hope to rebuild itself.

Satoshi Mizota (溝田 悟士): Evangelist at Matsudo Rokukodai St. Stephen Chapel. Born in Hiroshima Prefecture in 1976. After completing a master's program at Aichi University, he completed a doctoral program at the Graduate School of Integrated Arts and Sciences, Hiroshima University. He has served

as a visiting researcher at the Utrecht Institute of Linguistics, Utrecht University in the Netherlands, and as a researcher at Hiroshima University's Graduate School of Integrated Arts and Sciences. His publications include Deciphering the Gospels: The Linguistics of the Resurrection Narratives (Kodansha).

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Discrimination: Denied Contracts Due To Religion

• August 16, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



Members of religious minority denied contracts because of their faith



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

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by the Religious Freedom Investigative Team of the editorial department of *Sekai Nippo*

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The news coverage surrounding the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe became a major sensation when police information emerged shortly after the incident. This information stated that Tetsuya Yamagami (山上徹也), the accused, harbored resentment toward the high monetary donations made by his mother, a member of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly known as the [Unification Church](#)). The criticism of the [Family Federation](#) became so intense and frequent that it overshadowed the heinous nature of the crime itself.

Amidst this, members of the [Family Federation](#) began to experience various forms of victimization, including discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, and damage to property.



Committed heinous crime: Tetsuya Yamagami, the man who killed Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan. Photo: Andrew2592009 / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC ASA 4.0 Int](#)



Attorney Tatsuki Nakayama. Photo: [Sekai Nippo](#)

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the [Family Federation](#)'s registration as a religious corporation. At an international symposium held in France in June, international lawyer Tatsuki Nakayama (中山達樹) emphasized that “during this period, the [Family Federation](#) has never been involved in any criminal activities.”

However, the Kishida administration, without going through the Cabinet, changed the interpretation of the *Religious Corporations Act* overnight. They decided to include “acts that are unlawful according to civil law” as a condition for exercising the right to question religious organizations. Consequently, the government petitioned the courts to issue a dissolution order against the [Family Federation](#) based on the *Religious Corporations Act*. As a result, many members are concerned that discrimination and harm will increase even further.

There are also problems affecting daily life, such as difficulties in making purchases. At a press conference on 7th November last year, [Family Federation](#) Chairman Tomihiro Tanaka (田中富広) cited cases such as “being refused real estate contracts”, “being denied the purchase of flowers or catered lunch boxes”, and “a famous automobile manufacturer banning the sale of cars, making it impossible to buy one”.

One such case occurred in March at a Nissan-affiliated used car dealership in Aichi Prefecture, where an employee of the [Family Federation](#) in the same prefecture attempted to purchase a car under the [organization](#)'s name but was refused. Although there was no issue when the employee initially expressed the intention to purchase under the [organization](#)'s name, they were later contacted by the dealership's representative, who informed them that the sale could not proceed despite the contract (under the [organization](#)'s name) having already been stamped.



Tomihiro Tanaka, here at press conference in Tokyo 7th Nov. 2023. Photo: Screenshot from live transmission by the [Family Federation of Japan](#).

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When the representative was contacted by phone for confirmation, he explained that the refusal was because the [Family Federation](#) was “a group that has caused public concern” and was “facing a request for a dissolution order from the *Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*”, making it “socially inappropriate, and not suitable for the company to engage with”.



Signing contract at used-car dealership.
Illustration: Microsoft Designer Image Creator, 17th August 2024.

In Tokyo, a Toyota-affiliated used car dealership also canceled a vehicle purchase contract after the payment had been made and the delivery date set. In September last year, a church employee visited the dealership, requested a quote, and expressed the intention to purchase under the [organization's](#) name. While exchanging documents and setting the delivery date, the dealership contacted

them on 10th October of the same year, stating they wanted to cancel the vehicle sale contract. The reason given was again “a decision based on public opinion”.

The church employee in charge said,

“This clearly feels like discrimination to us. We had paid the money and set the delivery date, but the unilateral cancellation left us very depressed.”

The [Family Federation](#) has sent letters of protest to both companies through their lawyer, demanding the sales refusal be retracted, citing unfair discrimination and prejudice.

There have also been difficulties with real estate contracts. Yoshihiro Tsuda (pseudonym), an employee of the [Family Federation](#) living in Ibaraki Prefecture, faced rejection from a guarantor company when he tried to rent a property under his name for his parents to relocate to last year.

Tsuda recalls,

“Because my elderly parents had to quit their jobs, they needed to move out of the house they lived in. Since my parents and my sister’s family all lived in Saitama, I was looking for a property within Saitama Prefecture.”

In September of last year, Tsuda found a suitable property, and after consulting with the real estate company, he filled out the contract on behalf of his parents, including his name, occupation, and income. He explains,

“The real estate company seemed to think it would probably be okay, as they were only focused on the income aspect, but later, I received a notification that the application had been halted during the review process.”

He was not given a detailed reason for the rejection. Tsuda was left with an uneasy feeling, suspecting that his religious beliefs may have negatively impacted the contract.

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Featured image above: Yoshihiro Tsuda (pseudonym), who was refused a real estate contract, in the morning of the 10th August 2024 in Ibaraki Prefecture. Photo: Takahide Ishii (石井孝秀) / [Sekai Nippo](#)

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